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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LAGOS 000226

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STATE FOR AF/W
STATE FOR INR/AA
WARSAW FOR LISA PIASCIK
CIUDAD JUAREZ FOR DONNA BLAIR
ISTANBUL FOR TASHAWNA SMITH
SAO PAULO FOR ANDREW WITHERSPOON
DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/22/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: PARTY CHAIR SPEAKS OF ALLIANCES, SECURITY IN LAGOS

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Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a March 19 meeting with Econoff, Democratic Peoples Alliance (DPA) Chairman Supo Shonibare described an alliance with the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) at the state level. This alliance, intended to capitalize on rifts within the Action Congress (AC) and People's Democratic Party (PDP), was aimed at strengthening the DPA's chances for winning the Lagos gubernatorial race. This increasingly competitive race had called into play the OPC and its many factions that might not be easily controlled on election day. End summary.

DPA Benefits From Internecine Squabbles

¶2. (C) In a March 19 meeting with Econoff, Democratic Peoples Alliance (DPA) Chairman Supo Shonibare said some prominent figures in the Alliance for Democracy (AD), Action Congress (AC) and Peoples Democratic party (PDP), displeased with developments within their parties, had pledged behind-the-scenes support for DPA gubernatorial candidate Jimi Agbaje. AC players still were bristling that Governor Bola Tinubu handpicked the AC candidate, his Chief of Staff Tunde Fashola. PDP figures were similarly unenthused with Senator Musiliu Obanikoro as the PDP candidate. (Note: Obanikoro won the candidacy in a run-off against Hilda Williams, widow of former PDP gubernatorial candidate Funsho Williams. Initial results signalled Williams was the winner, but this was reversed following a recount. End note.) Shonibare claimed the reversal was made at the behest of President Obasanjo's daughter, who has a close personal relationship with Obanikoro.

¶3. (C) These AC and PDP players could not declare support for Agbaje publicly, Shonibare said, because they continued to benefit financially via their party affiliations. However, Shonibare claimed PDP leaders told him they would attempt different tactics to take Obanikoro out of the running.

¶4. (C) The DPA would benefit from rifts within the PDP and AC, said Shonibare. This was particularly so in the Alimosho area of Lagos State. Alimosho, with ten percent of the state's registered voters, was the highest-density area and thus would be fiercely contested. The PDP's support base in Alimosho originated with Funsho Williams. Now that Hilda Williams was not the PDP candidate, much of the votes belonging to those who would have supported Hilda were up for grabs.

¶5. (C) Similarly, defections from the AC had divided the party's supporters. Last week, Shonibare was visited by an aide close to the ANPP gubernatorial candidate for Lagos State, Tokunbo Afikuyomi. The aide suggested Afikuyomi might withdraw from the race and endorse DPA candidate Agbaje. Afikuyomi, who was previously a member of the AC, decamped to the DPA in search of the DPA nomination when Fashola was declared the AC gubernatorial candidate. Once Agbaje won in the DPA primary, Afikuyomi migrated once again, this time to the ANPP. Since then he has remained close with Shonibare. The aide said Afikuyomi was awaiting direction from the ANPP leadership before approaching Shonibare with this plan, Shonibare recounted.

¶6. (U) Background: Jimi Agbaje, born on March 2, 1957, was active with the Alliance for Democracy (AD), the predecessor of the AC. He has served as National Treasurer of Afenifere since 2000. Agbaje attended St. Gregory's College in Lagos and was graduated in pharmaceutical studies from the University of Ife. Agbaje hails from the private sector; he is Managing Director of JayKay Pharmacy, Ltd. End background.

DPA/ANPP Discuss Alliance At The State Level

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¶7. (C) The All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) was evaluating strategies to maximize its recently-forged alliance with the DPA. The DPA, which has no presidential candidate, declared support for ANPP presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari. Buhari was the only candidate who represented hope for Nigeria, said Shonibare.

¶8. (C) On March 17, seven leaders of Afenifere, a Yoruba socio-political group, including Chief Shonibare, active leader Chief Fasharoti, Chief Ayo Adebajo and Olaniwu Ajayi met Buhari and his running mate, former ANPP Chairman Ume-Ezeoke. The participants discussed the ANPP/DPA alliance and how it could be used most advantageously at the state level. Afikuyomi's retreat from the Lagos gubernatorial race and subsequent endorsement of Agbaje could strengthen Buhari's position in the south, Shonibare claimed. While Buhari is favored in the north, he is perceived by southerners as a fanatic. The alliance with the DPA and Afenifere could attenuate this, suggested Shonibare. (Note: Afenifere comprises the DPA's political base. End note.)

DPA Is Stymied By Poor Communication, Resources

¶9. (C) The reason the alliance had not been more effective was because of poor communication, offered Shonibare. Because the DPA and Afenifere supported Tinubu in the 2003 election, many people still associated the DPA and Afenifere with Tinubu. Furthermore, Tinubu and Atiku dominated the press, to the extent of marginalizing alternative viewpoints, argued Shonibare. For example, Chief Gani Fawehinmi, a well-known human rights lawyer and activist, has made public statements in support of the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) disqualification of Atiku, arguing it was constitutional. In spite of Fawehinmi's prominence, these comments had not been printed in the news media, Shonibare

claimed, due to a media bias in favor of Atiku and Tinubu.

¶10. (C) A dismal power supply also has also dimmed the ability to campaign, observed Shonibare. Television, the most popular medium, was unavailable to the majority of Lagosians who did not have access to power generators. The DPA was also at a disadvantage compared to its better-funded opposition. The AC had 200 buses for its campaign in Lagos; the PDP had 120; and the DPA had only 20 buses, lamented Shonibare.

Strongmen's Tactics Might Cancel Each Other Out

¶11. (C) Shonibare discussed the Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC). The activities of the OPC were linked to politics in neighboring Ogun State, he explained. Governor Tinubu was supporting the AC gubernatorial candidate for Ogun State, Adedi Dina, and simultaneously undermining PDP governor and second-term candidate Gbenga Daniels, Shonibare argued. Daniels, in search of allies in his gubernatorial bid, had allegedly approached Shonibare and pledged support for Jimi Agbaje. In turn, Shonibare said, the OPC, which takes its direction from Afenifere, would support Daniels. (Note: The OPC, a militant Yoruba nationalist group, is composed of two factions, both of which Shonibare claims sees Afenifere as their leader. End note.)

¶12. (C) Thus, the OPC would support the DPA and Gbenga Daniels, Shonibare surmised, the police would support the AC. But the Gani Adams faction of the OPC contained younger elements and might prove greater in numbers than Dr. Frederick Fasehun's faction, noted Shonibare, and thus would be more difficult to control. Nevertheless, the question of manpower "also affects thugs", he said, and Adams might not have enough manpower to spread out across the state. (Note: While Shonibare claimed both OPC factions took direction from Afenifere, he said Afenifere had regular and direct contact with Fasehun and less systematic contact with Adams. Shonibare may be a bit too smug in his assertion of Afenifere

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control of the OPC. Fasehun is older than Shonibare and a contemporary of the Afenifere leadership. Gani Adams, meanwhile, is younger and his appeal is more in the streets and poor neighborhoods. Adams and some of his people might swing more toward the AC than DPA. End note.)

Election Day Tensions

¶13. (C) While vote rigging would be easier in the lower-density riverine areas such as Eti-Osa, political parties and thugs would concentrate their activities in the higher-density areas, Shonibare predicted. Specifically, they would have a strong presence in Kosofe, Alimosho, and Mushin. In 2003, Tinubu concentrated his campaign and election-day efforts in Alimosho, said Shonibare. This area was not closely watched by independent observers, Shonibare recalled, which allowed for vote-rigging to go uncontested. This time, political parties were more aware and would ensure a strong presence there, he concluded.

¶14. (C) Shonibare said Alimosho, Lagos Island, Kosofe, and Eti-Osa would be the most critical areas to watch on election day. Alimosho, Lagos Island, and Kosofe had the highest density of votes, and Eti-Osa was susceptible to vote-rigging. Some attempts at rigging would be offset by voters, who sometimes demanded to see votes counted at the polling stations, Shonibare said. However, the real problem was transporting the ballots from the polling sites to collating centers, as it was often during this process when the results were tampered with, he warned.

Comment

¶15. (C) Shonibare's comments suggest the DPA is benefitting from the unrest within the AC and PDP. Whether this is enough to propel Agbaje from a gubernatorial longshot to the governor's seat is unlikely. The support Shonibare claims to be receiving from PDP and AC leaders does not seem to be matched with funds, DPA's greatest handicap. But the ANPP/DPA alliance could mean more support in Lagos and other parts of the southwest for Buhari if both parties are able to communicate effectively with the electorate.

¶16. The scenario of standoff between competing bands of political toughs that Shonibare suggests as the solution to massive vote manipulation is worrisome. In spite of Shonibare's assurances to the contrary, Gani Adams's faction of the DPA is not fully under Afenifere's control. The OPC's presence at high-density polling sites may add a spark to what is already a combustible situation. End comment.

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